

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 IO-13 SSM-03 HA-05 AID-05 /103 W
-----038044 241102Z /11

P R 231325Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8406
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, LE
SUBJ: PRESIDENT SARKIS ADDRESSES THE NATION

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT SARKIS ADDRESSED THE LEBANESE PEOPLE ON TELEVISION EVENING OF JUNE 22. IN VERY BROAD TERMS HE DEFENDED THE PROGRESS OF HIS GOVERNMENT TO DATE AND POINTED OUT THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL OBSTACLES TO MORE RAPID PROGRESS. PRINCIPAL THEME WAS A POLITE BUT UNMISTAKABLE CRITICISM OF THE LEBANESE THEMSELVES FOR THEIR FAILURE TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT OR ASSUME RESPONSIBLE POLITICAL ATTITUDES, AND AN APPEAL TO THE CITIZENRY TO DO BETTER. "IT WAS THANKS TO (A) POSITIVE FEELING OF RESPONSIBILITY THAT (ADVANCED) SOCIETIES OVERCAME THEIR SETBACKS AND ACHIEVED PROGRESS...." HE AVOIDED DIRECTLY ADDRESSING THE BURNING ISSUES OF THE DAY AND ANNOUNCED NO NEW PROGRAMS OR DECISIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. HIGHLIGHTS OF PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS, TEXT OF WHICH WAS
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CARRIED IN IKE JUNE 23, ARE AS FOLLOWS. (FULL TEXT BEING
POUCHED TO NEA/ARN.)

3. DEFENSE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S RECORD. "WE HAVE RESTORED THE STATE'S BASIC ELEMENTS, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE YET TO COMPLETE ITS STRUCTURE...THE AUTHORITIES BEGAN TO DISCHARGE THEIR DUTIES; THE ADMINISTRATION RESUMED ITS WORK; THE UNIVERSI-

TIES AND SCHOOLS OPENED THEIR DOORS; THE SECURITY FORCES WERE REACTIVATED, DESPITE THE WEAKNESS OF THEIR RESOURCES; THE REBUILDING OF THE ARMY STARTED; RECONSTRUCTION WAS LAUNCHED; THE PRIVATE SECTOR MOVED AHEAD WITH ADMIRABLE VITALITY...."

4. THE STATE AND THE PEOPLE. SARKIS DEVELOPED THE THEME THAT THE GOVERNMENT ULTIMATELY CAN BE NO STRONGER THAN THE POPULACE: "THE AUTHORITIES ARE NOT AN ALIEN BODY, BUT ARE OF THE PEOPLE AND FOR THEM...WHAT I RECEIVED OF THE STATE (IN 1976) WAS ITS VESTIGES. THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES HAD GIVEN IN TO CURRENTS WHICH WERE TEARING THEM APART."

5. INTERNAL OBSTACLES. SARKIS BLAMED BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS WHICH HAVE MADE THE GOVERNMENT'S WORK EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. INTERNALLY, HE NOTED, "SERIOUS INCIDENTS OCCURRED AT THE RATE OF ONE OR MORE EVERY MONTH, GIVING THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY WERE BLOWS DELIVERED DELIBERATELY TO BLOCK THE RETURN TO STABILITY AND A NORMAL LIFE." THERE WERE "MALICIOUS RUMORS AND CAMPAIGNS AIMED AT CASTING DOUBT UPON EVERYTHING WE DID OR SOUGHT...DIFFICULTIES WERE CREATED FOR US IN OUR EFFORTS TO BUILD THE ARMY, EVEN BEFORE WE HAD PROGRESSED HALFWAY TOWARD THAT GOAL. THE SAME APPLIES TO THE SECURITY FORCES" HE NOTED THAT IN SOUTH LEBANON THERE WERE "SEVERAL DISTRICTS STILL BEYOND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE STATE, AND LARGE NUMBERS OF ARMED MEN, LEBANESE AND NON-LEBANESE, IN LEBANON, BE THEY MEMBERS OF PARTIES AND ORGANIZATIONS OR NOT."
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6. EXTERNAL OBSTACLES. EXTERNAL FACTORS, HE NOTED, INCLUDED "ARAB NEGOTIATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL INTERACTIONS (WHICH) WERE SOON AT WORK AGAIN IN THE LEBANESE ARENA, HINDERING THE MISSION OF THE ARAB PEACEKEEPING FORCES, SO THAT AGREEMENTS WHICH WERE TO BE IMPLEMENTED WERE NOT IMPLEMENTED, ARMS THAT WERE TO BE GATHERED WERE NOT GATHERED, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF STATE SOVEREIGNTY WAS NOT REALIZED. THIS...BECAME A MAJOR FACTOR IN DELAYING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOLUTIONS THAT HAD BEEN PREPARED."

7. FAILURE OF LEBANESE RESPONSIBILITY. SARKIS NOTED THAT THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE COULD NOT BE RELIED UPON TO SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS AND, "WE PREFERRED, ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION, TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS THROUGH OTHER MEANS, LEANING ON THE PEOPLE'S WISDOM, MATURITY AND SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY." THE STATE COULD NOT BE BLAMED ENTIRELY FOR THE ENSUING FAILURES: "THESE FACTORS MUST BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION BEFORE ANY EVALUATION IS MADE OF THE STATE'S POLICY OR BEHAVIOR... CRITICISM OF THE STATE WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THOSE FACTORS WOULD BE AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY...IT IS A MISTAKE TO OVERBURDEN THE STATE AT A TIME WHEN IT HAS NOT YET RECOVERED ITS FULL

VITALITY...THIS...DOES NOT EXEMPT YOU, AS INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS, OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE NATION. YOU ARE WELL AWARE THAT A CITIZEN, IN ADVANCED SOCIETIES, CONSIDERS HIMSELF RESPONSIBLE FOR SECURITY AND ORDER IN HIS COUNTRY AND FOR ANY-

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ICA-11 IO-13 SNM-05 HA-05 AID-05 /105 W
-----038014 240940Z /11

P R 231325Z JUN 78
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
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THING RELATED TO HIS COUNTRY'S REPUTATION. IT WAS THANKS TO THIS POSITIVE FEELING OF RESPONSIBILITY THAT THOSE SOCIETIES OVERCAME THEIR SETBACKS AND ACHIEVED THE PROGRESS THEY HAVE ACHIEVED." HE CONCLUDED HIS SPEECH WITH AN APPEAL: "LET US RISE TO THE LEVEL OF THE CHALLENGE AND PROVE WE ARE WORTHY OF LIFE AND SURVIVAL. I EXTEND MY HAND TO YOU, TO DRAW STRENGTH FROM YOUR FAITH, YOUR UNITY AND YOUR MATURITY. IT IS ONLY THROUGH YOUR UNITY, YOUR MATURITY AND YOUR FAITH THAT LEBANON HAS SURVIVED, AND WITH GOD'S HELP, LEBANON WILL CONTINUE TO SURVIVE."

8. THE MOST SPECIFIC COMMENTS THE PRESIDENT MADE WERE ON SOUTH LEBANON (PARA 5 ABOVE). ON THE TONY FRANGIEH ASSASSINATION AND DEVELOPING BLOOD FEUD BETWEEN THE NORTHERNERS AND THE PHALANGE PARTY, HE ONLY NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN "INCIDENTS WHICH OCCURRED RECENTLY IN NORTH LEBANON AND WHICH DEEPLY DISTRESS ME." DESPITE SPECULATION IN THE BEIRUT PRESS BEFORE THE SPEECH, HE DID NOT ADDRESS IN ANY FASHION A POSSIBLE

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NEW SECURITY PLAN IN WHICH THE LEBANESE ARMY AND POLICE WOULD WORK TOGETHER WITH THE SYRIAN ADF. HE DID MAKE WHAT HAS BEEN A STANDARD PART OF ALL HIS SPEECHES SINCE HE BECAME PRESIDENT; I.E., A GESTURE TOWARDS THE SYRIANS, NOTING THE "MUCH APPRECIATED SUPPORT WHICH CAME UPON THE INITIATIVE OF OUR BROTHERS THE SYRIANS, WHO WERE JOINED BY OTHER BROTHERS."

9. REACTIONS. PRESS REACTION JUNE 23 IS FAVORABLE BUT ANODYNE. ENGLISH-LANGUAGE IKE SIMPLY REPRINTED EXTRACTS FROM THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH AS ITS OWN EDITORIAL, WITHOUT FURTHER COMMENT.

10. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR HEADLINED ITS ACCOUNT, "SARKIS RESPONDS TO DETRACTORS OF THE STATE." IT CLAIMED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WAS "GREETED BY BURSTS OF AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE IN CERTAIN NEIGHBORHOODS." L'ORIENT-LE JOUR STRESSED THAT SARKIS GAVE A DETAILED EXPLANATION WHY THE STATE HAS NOT YET RECOVERED ALL ITS AUTHORITY, BUT IT SEEMED TO MISS THE POINT THAT THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES HAVE SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEBANON'S CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS.

11. ANWAR REPORTED VARIOUS DEPUTIES APPLAUDED THE SPEECH. PIERRE GEMAYEL REPORTEDLY SAID HE WOULD PUT ALL HIS RESOURCES AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE PRESIDENT. CAMILLE CHAMOUN, HOWEVER, WAS QUOTED AS SAYING, "LET THE PRESIDENT LIBERATE DAMOUR AND SHIYAH AND THUS HE WILL SATISFY EVERYBODY."

12. AN NAHAR WROTE THAT, "THE PRESIDENT KNOWS WHAT THE LEBANESE WANT AND THEY KNOW THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL DO IT...THE STATE WILL BE FROM NOW ON THE ONLY AUTHORITY WHICH TAKES THE DECISIONS."

13. COMMENT: SARKIS' SPEECH WAS COMPLETELY TRUE TO FORM. HE HAS NOT, IN HIS FEW BROADCASTS TO THE NATION SINCE HE ASSUMED OFFICE, USED THE MEDIA TO ANNOUNCE NEW INITIATIVES. HIS CHOICE
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OF TERMINOLOGY WAS BROAD ENOUGH FOR ANY POLITICAL GROUP IN THE COUNTRY TO POINT THE FINGER AT OTHERS FOR LACK OF RESPONSIBILITY OR LACK OF SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT. WE THEREFORE CONCLUDE THAT THE OPERATIVE IMPACT OF THE SPEECH ON THE LEBANESE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE WILL BE MINIMAL.

DECONTROL 31 DEC 78.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SPEECHES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT03482
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DG ALTERED
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780263-0924
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780628/aaaaaxmo.tel
Line Count: 223
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 41071b83-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2233882
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT SARKIS ADDRESSES THE NATION
TAGS: PINT, SOPN, LE, (SARKIS, ILYAS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/41071b83-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014